

Back to Hawkins by theamiableanachronism

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Crazy Hijinks, Epic Friendship, Gen, Time Travel, based on Back to the Future, no bottles of 7-UP were harmed in the writing of this fic, pushing the envelope, this was for an 80s movie AU day

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Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper

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Summary:

In which Dustin recreates the Delorean and inadvertently sends the kids back to 1960s Hawkins.

Back to Hawkins

Author's Note:

(the title was unintentional I assure you. also yes this will be super corny in case you're wondering. buckle up.)

“Behold!”

With a flourish, Dustin unveiled the rusty cab of 1978 Monte Carlo. The hood was missing, exposing the rusting engine underneath. Only one once-white door on the driver’s side and four bald tires completed his creation. Through the cracked, scrubbed-clean windshield there was a black box, about the size of a Kleenex box, nestled between the two front seats. Inside it was a set of plastic tubes, clear liquid running through the Y-shaped path.

“Is that- “ Lucas began hesitantly, taking a step toward the car. He placed a hand on the hub and leaned forward to peer inside. “Is that what I think it is?”

Dustin bouncing on the balls of his feet with his hands behind his back, said nothing and grinned at the rest of the gang who were standing in semicircle around the car in the middle of the junkyard. Lucas looked up at Dustin and took the look on his face as answer to his question, which it was. He stood up slowly and put his hands on his hips, trying to keep up his reputation as most practical of the group by schooling his expression into something resembling sternness, but even he couldn’t keep all of the excitement out of his eyes, especially not when it was dawning on everyone else’s faces. There was a dull clatter as Max laid her skateboard in the dead grass at her feet and walked up to the car, crawling into the passenger seat. “It’s a time machine?” she said, a smile starting on her freckled face. Dustin shrugged and continued bouncing until Mike, with a fake exasperated sigh, said, “Would you just say something already, Dustin?”

“Okay, okay,” he chuckled, holding his hands up in mock-surrender.

“Yes, it’s a time machine.”

“Whoa!”

“No way...”

“You’re KIDDING me!”

"How long were you working on this?" Mike asked, slowly walking around the back of the car.

"Eh, a couple months."

Lucas gaped. "A couple months? No way!"

"Well, four and a half."

"And it works?" Will asked, climbing in the driver's side and studying the flux capacitor between the two front seats.

Dustin's smile faded. "Uh... well, I don't know yet. I was hoping we could give it a test run."

"Just like in the movie?" El hadn't said anything since they'd arrived in the junkyard, just silently watched with eager eyes as her friends examined Dustin's creation. She was crouched in front of the engine, studying the rusty parts. His smile returned and he nodded excitedly.

"Yeah! Just like in the movie."

"Wait." Lucas pushed himself away from where he'd been leaning on the car. "How exactly are we supposed to get this thing up to 88 miles per hour?"

Dustin paused. "Well- "

"You're not even old enough to drive!"

"Neither are you!"

"Neither are YOU. So how are we going to drive it?"

Dustin scoffed. "C'mon, how hard can it be?" He turned and waved Will out of the driver's seat. The remaining four rolled their eyes and crowded around the car to watch. "All you do is turn the key and hit the gas." He turned the key and hit the gas-

And nothing happened.

Except for a lot of coughing and hacking from the engine as the tailpipe let out a cloud of acrid exhaust that seeped in through the places where the car doors used to be.

"I'd say roll up the window, but- " Will wheezed, covering his mouth with his hand.

Dustin turned off the ignition and climbed out of the car. The rest of them followed suit, giving the car a wide berth, letting the exhaust settle before slowly moving in again to stare dejectedly at what could have been.

"Well, it was worth a try," Dustin said with a sigh. A melancholy breeze pushed the single open car door closed with a creak and

fragile slam. "I didn't even get to show you the time travel settings."

"You still could," El said quietly after several moments' pause.

Dustin looked up at her and a slow smile started to grow on his face.

"Okay." He said, walking back to the car and pausing to yell over the top, "Are you coming or not?"

Once they were all inside, Lucas, Will, Mike, and El crammed into the back seat, and Max in the passenger's seat.

"So," Dustin began, twisting in the driver's seat to face the back. He pointed at the metal panel set into the dashboard where a radio used to be. "So this is how we tell where we're going. The top is where we're going, the middle is where we are, and then this one at the bottom tells us where we were. So, if we went to 1955," he said pushing a series of buttons. "The top would say November 13 1955, and once we got there, the middle would say 1955 too. And then the bottom would say what the middle one says now. November 13 1985. Got it?"

"We know how it works, Dustin," Max sighed. "We all saw the movie."

"Yeah, well, I changed some things! Like how is a kid like me going to get plutonium, huh? So no plutonium. And I used this alarm clock, I souped it up so that its time energy would control the panels. THAT'S different from the movie! And once you set the dates here, then all you have to do is set the alarm. Once you hit the gas, it starts the alarm clock, which starts the time circuits, which starts the flux capacitor, and when the alarm goes off- "

"Dustin, stop!" Mike said, pinching the bridge of his nose.

"You asked! It's a delicate process."

Suddenly, there was a crash as a rock smashed through the back windshield. It landed with a thud in front of the flux capacitor.

"HEY LOSERS!"

Dustin dropped his head against the steering wheel. "Oh sh- "

Lucas looked and swore. "It's Troy."

"What does he want now?" Max growled, looking at the bullies coming across the junkyard. She climbed over Lucas and was just about to leap out of the car when El grabbed her arm. There was an earnestness in her eyes that some might call murderous if they didn't know El. But her fists were clenched as she pulled Max back into the car and shook her head.

"Hey Toothless! I think you've got something of mine!"

Lucas' head swiveled to face Dustin. "Dustin, what did you do," he

said darkly.

Dustin didn't lift his head and told his feet, "I may have found some of the components in an abandoned lot that I SWEAR I DIDN'T KNOW was their territory."

"Guys, they're getting closer, do something! We can't just sit in a car and let them get us!" Mike said, watching their approach through the back windshield. Dustin lifted his head and turned the key in the ignition. The engine roared and shook the car. Then he put his foot on the gas pedal, flooring it until the familiar cloud of exhaust filled the air and clogged their lungs.

"Dustin what are you doing?" Mike coughed.

"Just bear with me!"

"It doesn't work!"

The car wobbled and shook and coughed and hacked but didn't move and the bullies came closer and closer. Max tried to fight her way out of the car but before she could she was thrown against the seat as the car leaped forward. It landed a few feet away from it had been but with the slight difference that there were bolts of lightning flying from the front to the back of the car, sparking and crackling and lighting up the entire full-of-screaming-children-inside of the car.

"DUSTIN WHAT DID YOU DO?" Mike screamed.

"I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING! My foot's not even on the gas!"

"THEN- "

Will didn't get the chance to finish his sentence. Instead of being about to run into the side of an abandoned bus, suddenly the car was barreling across a field toward a barn.

"TURN THE WHEEL! TURN THE WHEEL!"

"YOU THINK I'M NOT TRYING, LUCAS? IT'S STUCK."

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT'S STUCK?"

"I MEAN I CAN'T TURN IT! IS THAT CLEAR ENOUGH FOR YOU!"

"BRACE YOURSELVES!" Mike yelled as they crashed through the barn doors. They landed in a pile of hay that let out an ominous clank and yelped as the entire barn creaked above them. A rainstorm of dust covered the car.

And then it was all over.

"Is... is everyone okay?" Will coughed and looked around the car. Besides being a little groggy as they sat up, everyone looked okay.

"Everybody out," Dustin wheezed as everyone tumbled out of the car into the hay.

They sat there for a minute, panting and coughing as the last of the

exhaust faded away.

"We... are lucky to be alive." Lucas said slowly.

"Yeah," Dustin breathed, lying on his back, staring up at the rafters.

"Since you didn't check that the STEERING WHEEL DIDN'T TURN."

"Oh please Lucas- "

"Who doesn't make sure that a steering wheel doesn't turn! We could have been killed!"

"Except we weren't!" Mike stood up and huffed. "Look, it was crazy, but let's just get home, okay? Dustin, go make sure that it's okay if we leave this here. We'll come back tomorrow."

"Okay," Dustin said with a disappointed shrug. "I really thought it would work."

"I'll come with you," El said suddenly, jogging to catch up with him.

"Thanks, El," he said with a smile.

As the two headed off, the remaining four closed the barn doors, Mike and Will on one, Max and Lucas on the other. They waited just outside, guarding the time machine in case Troy and his cronies had managed to catch up with them.

But a few minutes passed and suddenly they heard the sound of running footsteps and Dustin yelling at the top of his lungs.

"GUYS."

They leaped to their feet and met Dustin and El as they raced around the corner of the barn.

"Dustin, what is it?" Mike asked. Dustin bent over, clutching his knees for support as he gasped for breath.

"Hang. On. A. Minute," he wheezed, holding up a hand. Mike turned to El, who pulled a folded piece of paper out of her coat pocket and handed it to Mike. It was a piece of newspaper, torn from the front page. Mike opened it and everyone crowded around him to read over his shoulder. Across the top it said "Hawkins Tribune Issue 36 No. 83 October 13 1955"

"1955?" Max said. "1955?" she said again, her voice going up a few decibels.

Dustin finally stood up, clutching his side with a wince. "1955," he repeated. "We're in 1955, guys."

"It worked?" Lucas said incredulously. "How?" he sputtered.

Dustin shook his head. "I don't know. But all I know is, we need to get home."

"What?" Max gasped. "We're in 1955 and you want to go home already?"

"We don't even know if it'll get us back or not!"

Max huffed, blowing a red strand of hair out of her face. "Well then let's test it!" She climbed into the driver's seat and turned the ignition. She floored the gas pedal and then screamed as the car shook, shaking her out of her seat.

Dustin climbed over her and into the seat. "Let me try, okay?" He repeated the same actions, to no effect. "Hang on!" he said, vaulting out of the seat and around to the front of the car. He leaned down until the brim of his hat was touching the engine. He muttered something to himself then raced back into the driver's seat, where he fiddled with the alarm clock on the dashboard and then turned to examine the flux capacitor. He let out a yelp and leaped out of the car.

"Guys, I know what's wrong! We're out of fuel!"

A moment passed and Will opened his mouth then closed it. "That's it?" he said. "We're just... out of gas?"

Dustin nodded, his hat bobbing off his head. He leaned down to pick it up. "Well," he said, standing up and brushing it off before slapping it back on his head. "Not exactly gas."

"What is it?" El asked.

Dustin coughed and mumbled something behind his hand.

"What?" Mike said. "Dustin, move your hand, we can't understand you."

"7-Up, okay?"

Lucas snorted. "You used soda?"

"Hey, it worked, alright?"

"Okay, fine," Mike said, shrugging. "Was there any 7-Up in the house?"

"There wasn't a house," El whispered. Everyone stopped and stared at her.

"No house?" Will asked.

"Where'd you find the paper, then?" Mike asked.

"It was floating around like that."

"Well, that's... not creepy at all," Lucas said, deadpan.

"We'll just have to walk and get some, I guess," Will shrugged.

They all looked at each other, then at Dustin. He looked back then sighed.

"You don't even have to ask. Yes, I brought my compass." He brushed past the group to the path running parallel to the woods. "LIKE YOU SHOULD HAVE," he yelled over his shoulder. A majestic eye roll

from Lucas and they were off.

“Oh man, are you KIDDING me?”

The kids were standing open-mouthed in front of the refrigerated section of Donald's grocery store. It was full of Dr. Pepper, Coca-Cola, A&W Root Beer, Crush, and a whole slew of flavors they didn't recognize. Except for one.

Dustin ran up to the front counter, leaving the rest of them to watch from one of the aisles. A tall skinny checker was busy working with a cash register, his back to Dustin.

“Excuse me!”

The cashier turned around and smiled kindly at Dustin, even though his eyes scanned his hoodie and baseball cap covering his long curls and ended in a slightly confused frown.

“Can I help you?”

Will gasped.

“What's wrong?” El whispered, turning to Will.

“That's my mom's boss.”

“Really?” Max gasped.

“Yeah! Hey, do you think we'll see my mom?”

“Guys, shh, I can't hear anything!” Mike hissed.

They watched as Dustin and Donald conversed. Eventually, Dustin's shoulders slumped and he turned away from the counter and returned to the aisle.

“So?” Lucas said eagerly.

Dustin rolled his eyes and left them staring at the ceiling. “Someone bought all the 7-Up. For a dance. Tonight.”

“Gross,” Max said. “A dance is bad enough, but with 7-Up?”

“Can we focus please?” Mike asked, looking more than a little irritated. “Where's the dance? How much of this stuff do we need anyway?”

“Two bottles.”

Lucas scoffed. “Easy.”

“Yeah. But the dance is at the high school.”

Max groaned and swore.

Will shrugged. “If we run we could make it!”

Mike nodded and looked to Lucas, who shrugged. “Then let's go.”

With that, they dashed out the door and down the street to the high school.

After what felt like at least fifteen miles, but was actually only two at

the most, they arrived at the high school.

"Okay," Mike whispered, pausing to wait for Max to catch up.

"You know this would have been faster if I'd brought my skateboard, but we were in a car, so I thought, why waste my time bringing a skateboard? Haha, silly me," she said sarcastically, coming to a stop next to Dustin.

"Look, if it makes you happier, we'll walk back to the barn, okay?" Mike whispered. "Now, the cafeteria's right through those doors," he said, pointing to the set of double doors a few feet away. "Remember the science fair?"

Lucas, Will, and Dustin nodded. El and Max shrugged.

"Well, anyway, it's there. The dance is probably in the gym, so the soda's probably in there. All we have to do is go get it."

A door slammed around the corner and there was a sound of heels clacking furiously away from them on the concrete. Will put a finger to his lips and skirted along the wall until he could look around the corner. He jerked back and looked at the group with panicked eyes.

"It's my mom!"

"WHAT?"

Six heads peered around the corner of the building to watch a much-younger Joyce Byers leaning her back against the wall. The door slammed open again and a teenager in a black suit dashed out, stumbling to a stop a few feet away. Joyce rolled her eyes and said something too low for any of them to hear, but enough to make the newcomer toss his head back and throw back some obviously biting remark from the look on Joyce's face.

"Who's that?" Max whispered. She looked at Will, who was frowning at the back of the teenager's head.

"My dad," he said in a voice that was barely above a whisper. Max paused, searching Will's face, before slowly nodding in understanding.

Joyce and Lonnie had started to argue, still in voices too low for any of the kids to understand. Young Lonnie tried to move closer to Joyce, but she pushed him away. He stumbled again and paused, wavering on his feet, before taking another threatening step toward her.

"HEY!"

Seven heads turned toward the source of a yell that sounded both deep and high at the same time. Five were the kids, who were staring in horror at Will. Two were Joyce and Lonnie.

"What are you doing?" Lucas hissed as Lonnie took a step toward them. They slipped back behind the wall and were about to run, when they noticed why Will's voice had sounded so unlike his own. An instantly recognizable, much younger, but no less intimidating Jim Hopper was walking toward them, holding a cigarette. He gave them a brief glance before passing them and meeting Lonnie in the middle of the sidewalk.

"Guys! Let's go!" Dustin hissed. Almost reluctantly, Will turned and followed the rest of the group to the cafeteria. Dustin slowly opened the door and peeked inside before letting it close again. "There're people in there!"

Lucas swore. "Okay, look, I'll go in. You guys wait here."

"You really think we're going to let you go by yourself?"

Lucas huffed and opened the door. Inside were rows of tables full of used dishes and cups. There were about twenty men and women milling around the tables, picking up dishes and napkins and cups.

On a table across the room was the 7-Up.

"Great! We'll never get to them undetected!"

"I could do it," Max suggested.

"How? You have some super speed powers we don't know about?"

Max glared and opened her mouth to say something but was drowned out by a crashing noise from the other end of the cafeteria. An entire row of stacks of chairs had collapsed and every head had turned to discover the source of the noise, all except Max's. Hers was facing the same direction she was running, toward the 7-Up. In a flash, she was back.

"Told you I could do it," she said with a smile, two liters of 7-Up under her arms. "Thanks for the diversion," she said with a smile to El, who nodded and wiped away the blood under her nose with a tissue from Mike.

"Can we go now?" Lucas asked, anxiously looking over his shoulder. They dashed along the side of the school, looking down the sidewalk where they'd seen Will's parents. Hopper and Joyce were still leaning against the wall, laughing about something while each smoking a cigarette.

"I didn't know your mom and Hopper knew each other when they were kids!" Lucas asked as he ran.

"I didn't either!"

After the usual complaining and running and stitches in sides, they

arrived back at the barn.

"I feel like a lot more should have gone wrong," Dustin wheezed as he climbed back into the driver's seat, letting his head loll on the headrest. Mike was carefully pouring the 7-Up into gas tank.

"Are you sure this is going to work, Dustin?"

"Let's hope, because I'm out of ideas!"

Mike tucked the bottles inside his coat and climbed into the backseat. "Okay!"

Dustin grinned and turned the key in the ignition. The engine coughed and hacked and let out a stream of exhaust. This time, they were prepared, hands and sleeves covering their mouths and noses. He floored the gas pedal and- Nothing happened.

His shoulders slumped. "Are you kidding me?"

"I thought you said it was just out of fuel!"

"That's what I thought too!" he said, looking over his shoulder at Lucas before hitting the gas pedal again and again. "I thought all I had to do was hit the gaAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

That final hit to the gas pedal did it. The car was shot backward, lightning once again wrapping itself around the chassis and lighting up the interior of the car.

As suddenly as it had begun, it was over. The exhaust faded away and the lightning fizzled out, with one added bonus: with a loud tinkling crash, the alarm clock on the dashboard exploded. Springs flew everywhere and the glass of the face shattered. Dustin looked at it in horror and sighed. No one said anything, letting the silence fill the air.

"Sorry," Will said quietly, patting Dustin on the arm. Dustin adjusted his hat and shrugged.

"At least it worked. I guess it must have been the number of times I hit the gas pedal or something."

"Must have been," Mike said quietly.

They all climbed out of the car and slowly left the junkyard, El discreetly wiping away the blood from under her nose.

"So..." Lucas said slowly as Max rolled past him on her skateboard.

"What do we do now?"

"Wallow, most likely," Dustin sighed as he climbed on his bike.

"So you're just going to leave it?" Will asked, bringing up the rear of the group.

"I'll have to conduct more tests tomorrow." He shrugged. "Or not. It

wasn't as interesting as I thought, messing with time."

Max scoffed. "We didn't mess up any kind of timeline."

Dustin nodded thoughtfully as they turned onto Elm and Cherry.

"True. I don't know."

They rode along in silence, a quiet group of time travelers.

"It was kind of like the movie, though," Will said thoughtfully.

Mike chuckled. "How?"

He shrugged. "There was a school dance and everything. Except, you know, I didn't erase my entire existence or anything."

Silence descended again. Then Dustin screeched to a halt.

"We landed in a barn."

Max shrugged. "So?"

"A barn! A BARN. Just like in the movie! I KNEW it felt familiar. I mean, what are the odds that we would land in a barn?"

"We travel through time and you're talking about landing in a barn?"

Lucas sighed.

"Well, listen, it's just like El said before we left! 'Just like in the movie!'"

"Again, so what?" Max asked.

Dustin rolled his eyes. "It's kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy, don't you think?"

"Sure, fine, whatever," Lucas said, kicking off and rolling down the street.

"Is anyone else getting this?" Dustin said helplessly as the rest of the group took off down the street, forcing him to speed up to reach them.

"We get it, okay?" Mike grinned.

"It's a self-fulfilling prophecy, right?"

"Right. Self-fulfilling prophecy," Mike said with another grin at El, who was pretending not to be able to hear the conversation, standing up on the pedals of her bicycle and coasting down the street.